

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8836
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 1680/1

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP PINR PDEV PBOR ETRN MILI LA CB VM CH
SUBJECT: SOUPHANOUVONG LEADS LAO PARTY AND STATE DELEGATION TO KAMPUC
HEA

REF: VIENTIANE 1668

SUMMARY: SOUPHANOUVONG, LPRP POLITBURO MEMBER AND LPDR
PRESIDENT, LED A 24 PERSON PARTY AND GOVERNMENT DELEGA-
TION ON A FIVE DAY VISIT TO KAMPUCHEA RETURNING DECEMBER
22. TEXTS OF EDITORIALS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS
RELEASED DURING THE VISIT REVEALED APPARENT DISAGREE-
MENT BETWEEN THE LAO AND KAMPUCHEAN LEADERSHIP
REGARDING EACH STATE AND PARTY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
VIETNAMESE. THE LAO LEADERSHIP REFERRED TO THE VIET-
NAMESE ONLY ONCE AND IN PREDICTABLY POSITIVE TERMS.
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THE KAMPUCHEANS NEVER MENTIONED THE VIETNAMESE BY NAME,
BUT DID ATTACK "ANNEXATIONISTS", "EXPANSIONISTS" AND IN
PROBABLY REFERENCE TO THE VIETNAMESE, ADMONISHED THE
LAO NOT TO ALLOW ANYONE TO USE THEIR SOIL IN A MANNER
CONTRADICTORY TO THE PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE LAO-
KAMPUCHEAN RELATIONSHIP. THUS FAR, THE LAO MEDIA HAS
PUBLISHED ONLY SUMMARIES AND EXCERPTS OF OFFICIAL

STATEMENTS BY THE KAMPUCHEANS, OMITTING THOSE REMARKS THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS ANTI-VIETNAMESE. THERE IS SPECULATION BY SOME VIENTIANE DIPLOMATS THAT THE VISIT WAS INTENDED TO EASE SRV-GDK BORDER PROBLEMS, THOUGH THE ABSENCE OF A JOINT COMMUNIQUE SUGGESTS THAT ANY SUCH OBJECTIVE MET WITH FAILURE.

THE DELEGATION'S VISIT TO KOMPONG SOM AND THE PRESENCE ON THE DELEGATION OF THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC WORKS, AND TRANSPORTATION SUGGEST THAT THE LAO MAY HAVE DISCUSSED USE OF KOMPONG SOM AS AN ALTERNATIVE LAO ACCESS TO THE SEA.

THE VISIT, WHOSE SENDOFF AND WELCOME BACK CEREMONIES PRODUCED VERY LITTLE PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM, COINCIDED WITH MARKEDLY INCREASED SECURITY IN VIENTIANE. THIS APPARENTLY RESULTED FROM A BRIEF ATTACK ON VIENTIANE'S WATTAY AIRPORT BY UNKNOWN ELEMENTS EIGHT HOURS PRIOR TO THE LAO DELEGATION'S DEPARTURE (REF A). END SUMMARY.

1. SOUPHANOUVONG, LPRP POLITBURO MEMBER AND LPDR PRESIDENT, LED A 24 PERSON PARTY AND GOVERNMENT DELEGATION ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO PHNOM PENH, DECEMBER 17-22. IN ADDITION TO SOUPHANOUVONG, THE DELEGATION INCLUDED PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH, LPRP POLITBURO MEMBER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER; SANAN SOUTTHICHAK, LPRPCC MEMBER AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC WORKS, AND TRANSPORTATION; KOU SOUVANNA-CONFIDENTIAL

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METHI, MINISTER OF JUSTICE; V KHAMPHAY BOUPHA, VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; OUNHEAUN PHOUNSAVAT, VICE-MINISTER OF INFORMATION, PROPAGANDA, CULTURE, AND TOURISM; SOMPHAVAN INTHAVONG, MEMBER OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE SUPREME PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY; KHAMTHAN RATANAVONG, CHIEF OF PROTOCOL WITHIN THE MFA; PLUS FIFTEEN UNIDENTIFIED OTHERS. LPDR AMBASSADOR TO PHNOM PENH KHAMPHAN VILLACHIT ACCOMPANIED THE DELEGATION, AS DID SAMSAN, GDK AMBASSADOR TO THE LPDR.

2. THE LPDR'S "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE SRV, WHICH IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN MAJOR BORDER CLASHES WITH THE GDK, APPEARED TO BE A STUMBLING BLOCK IN LAO-KAMPUCHEAN DISCUSSIONS. KHIEU SAMPHAN, KAMPUCHEAN STATE PRESIDUM CHAIRMAN, IN REMARKS AT A WELCOMING BANQUET, ALLUDED TO THE GDK'S STRUGGLE WITH "FOREIGN EXPANSIONISTS", AND CONDITIONED IMPROVEMENT IN LPDR-GDK RELATIONS IN PART ON LAO AGREEMENT NOT TO ALLOW ANYONE TO USE THEIR SOIL IN A MANNER CONTRADICTORY TO THE PRINCIPLES OF "MUTUAL RESPECT, EQUALITY, AND PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM." HE PLEDGED ON KAMPUCHEA'S PART "NOT (TO) ALLOW ANYONE TO USE KAMPU-

CHEA AS A BASE AGAINST THE . . . LPDR." SOUPHANOUVONG MADE A SINGLE REFERENCE TO THE VIETNAMESE IN HIS SPEECHES AND THEN ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LPDR'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN STATES. AT A FAREWELL BANQUET DECEMBER 19, KHIEU SAMPHAN APPEARED TO BE ADVISING THE LAO ON THEIR "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE VIETNAMESE WHEN HE WARNED: "REVOLUTION CANNOT BE EXPORTED OR IMPORTED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER AND ... THE REVOLUTION OF A COUNTRY MUST BE CARRIED OUT BY THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY THEMSELVES INDEPENDENTLY WITHOUT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE OR INTERVENTION."

3. KHIEU ALSO SAID THAT "IN THE FIELD OF DEFENDING DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA, YOU LAO COMRADES HAVE COME TO CONFIDENTIAL

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FURTHER UNDERSTAND THE RESOLUTE STAND OF OUR KAMPUCHEAN PEOPLE WHO CONSIDER IT IMPERATIVE TO SAFEGUARD AND PRESERVE THE INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF THEIR COUNTRY SO THAT NO TERRITORIAL LAND AND SEA AREA WILL BE LOST AS IN THE PAST." AT ANOTHER POINT, HE SAID THAT "THE TWO SIDES (LAOS AND KAMPUCHEA) HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 1680/2

4. THUS FAR, THE LAO MEDIA HAVE PUBLISHED ONLY EXCERPTS OF THE KAMPUCHEAN LEADER'S REMARKS AND OFFICIAL GDK EDITORIALS AND OMITTED KAMPUCHEAN COMMENTS THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS ANTI-VIETNAMESE. THUS FAR NO JOINT COMMUNIQUE HAS BEEN PUBLISHED.

5. THE THAI AMBASSADOR EARLIER TOLD US THAT THE LAO VISIT WAS INTENDED TO "MEND VIETNAMESE FENCES." SOVIET EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY GUEORGUI KISSELOV TOLD US DECEMBER 22 THAT LE DUAN'S EFFORT TO EASE THE SRV'S BORDER PROBLEMS WITH THE GDK DURING THE VIETNAMESE LEADER'S RECENT VISIT TO PEKING HAD BEEN "IN VAIN" AND THAT SOUPHANOUVONG'S EFFORT ALSO WAS UNLIKELY TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL. MOST DIPLOMATS SPECULATED ALONG SIMILAR LINES, SUGGESTING THE SOUPHANOUVONG MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON THE STALKING-HORSE MISSION FOR THE VIETNAMESE.

6. THE DELEGATION MADE A ONE DAY VISIT TO THE MAJOR
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PORT OF KOMPONG SOM, WHERE IT INSPECTED PORT AND WAREHOUSE FACILITIES AND A RAILROAD STATION. IT ALSO VISITED SIEM REAP AND ANGKOR WAT.

7. HIGH RANKING PARTY AND STATE LEADERS, LED BY KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE, LPRP GENERAL SECRETARY AND LPDR PRIME MINISTER, SENT OFF AND WELCOMED BACK THE DELEGATION UNDER STRICT SECURITY PRECAUTIONS, APPARENTLY TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO AN ATTACK ON VIENTIANE'S WATTAY AIRPORT APPROXIMATELY EIGHT HOURS BEFORE THE DELEGATION'S DECEMBER 17 DEPARTURE (REF A).

8. COMMENT: THE ABSENCE THUS FAR OF A JOINT LAO-KAMPUCHEAN COMMUNIQUE AND THE FAILURE OF THE LAO MEDIA TO BROADCAST OR PUBLISH THOSE COMMENTS BY THE KAMPUCHEAN LEADERSHIP AND OFFICIAL PRESS THAT APPEAR TO REFER DEROGATORIALLY ON THE VIETNAMESE INDICATE THAT THE TWO SIDES REMAIN AT ODDS OVER THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE VIETNAMESE. IT THEREFORE SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE LAO COULD HAVE HAD MUCH SUCCESS AS AN INTERMEDIARY FOR THE VIETNAMESE WITH THE KAMPUCHEANS, IF INDEED THEY WERE CALLED UPON TO PLAY THE ROLE AT ALL.

9. MOREOVER, IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE LPDR IS THE SRV'S STAUNCHEST ALLY ANDDD THAT THE GDK IS THE SRV'S

MOST VIRULENT FOE, SOUPHANOUVONG'S VISIT AT THIS TIME RAN THE CLEAR RISK OF DAMAGING QUIESCENT LAO-KAMPUCHEAN RELATIONS. THE ABSENCE OF AJOINT COMMUNIQUE SUGGESTS THAT RELATIONS MAY INDEED HAVE BEEN DAMAGED, NOTWITHSTANDING KHIEU SAMPHAN'S COMMENT THAT THE TWO SIDES CAME TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER AS RESULT OF THE VISIT.

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10. THE VISIT TO KOMPONG SOM AND THE PRESENCE OF THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC WORKS, AND TRANSPORTATION ON THE DELEGATION SUGGESTS THAT THE LAO MAY HAVE SOUNDED OUT THE KAMPUCHEANS ON USE OF THE KOMPONG SOM PORT TO AUGMENT THE LPDR'S EXISTING ACCESS TO THE SEA, CONSISTING OF BANGKOK (MADE PROBLEMATIC BY PRECARIOUS RELATIONS WITH THAILAND) AND DA NANG (OF LIMITED UTILITY BECAUSE OF POOR OVERLAND COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN DA NANG AND SAVANNAKHET). HIGH LEVEL LPLA AND DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE APPROACHED SHELL OIL OFFICIALS REGARDING THE FEASIBILITY OF TRANSPORTING FUEL OVERLAND TO SOUTHERN LAOS FROM KOMPONG SOM. SHELL OFFICIALS ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY BUT HAVE TOLD US THAT THE LAO CONTENT THAT THE ROAD THROUGH KAMPUCHEA IS IN GOOD CONDITION. WE NOTE THAT ROAD DISTANCE BETWEEN DA NANG AND PAKSE IS ONLY APPROXIMATELY 150 KILOMETERS SHORTER THAN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN KOMPONG SOM AND PAKSE.

11. THE RECEPTION CEREMONY ON SOUPHANOUVONG'S RETURN TO VIENTIANE GAVE THE DIPLOMATIC PARTICIPANTS A POSSIBLE INSIGHT INTO POPULAR FEELINGS TOWARD THE LPDR REGIME. THE LAO ARE NORMALLY UNDEMONSTRATIVE, BUT SOUPHANOUVONG'S WELCOME HOME WAS SO RESTRAINED AS TO BE ALMOST SPOOKY. WHEN HE APPEARED AT THE DOOR OF HIS AN-24 NOT A SOUND COULD BE HEARD, AND AFTER INSPECTING THE HONOR GUARD AND SHAKING HANDS WITH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, HE HIMSELF HAD TO START THE ASSEMBLED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS' DESULTORY APPLAUSE.

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